

MOTIVATION FOR ACTION Sunday School- June 27, 2010

Unifying Topic: DEMONSTRATED IN ACTION

Lesson Text

I. Pleasing God (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2)

II. Living A Holy Life (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)

III. Minding Our Own Business (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12)

The Main Thought: Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more(1 Thess. 4:1, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Strong commitment to a belief or cause usually leads one to take action that reflects the level of dedication. To what can we commit ourselves that would make our actions benefit others? The passage imply that Christian commitment is both reinforced and strengthened by concrete actions that grow out of our desire to please God.

Lesson Aim: To teach how Paul instructed the Thessalonians to live holy lives.

Life aim: To teach how Christians are to live holy responsible lives with love as they strive to keep themselves clean from sin, love one another in Christ, refrain from meddling, and live respectfully among others.

- 4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.
- 4:2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.
- 4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:
- 4:4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;
- 4:5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:
- 4:6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.
- 4:7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.
- 4:8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.
- 4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.
- 4:10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;
- 4:11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;
- 4:12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

HISTORY:

In chapters two and three, he reminded them of their past - how he had come to Thessalonica and shared the gospel with them, and how they responded to it; how he rejoiced in the Thessalonians' persisting faith and love, and beseeches God to strengthen them in holiness. He ends with that purpose in his prayers, directing God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to stablish their hearts unblameable in holiness with all His saints.

LESSON:

1 Thessalonians 4:1-2 Pleasing God

This begins a major new discussion in First Thessalonians 4—the model walk or life of the believer. The model believer walks to please God. What does this mean? It means that he lives as God tell him to live, that he keeps God's commandments. The emphasis is on now on purity. Immorality is the rampaging monster that destroys more lives, families, and nations than any other single evil. The Christian life is often described as a "*walk*." Walking is a picture of moving (action) forward and progressing step by step and day by day. The tenderness is seen in the words "*beseech*" and "*brothers*." By calling believers, brothers, Paul was expressing deep affection and care for them. The word "*beseech*" (*erotomen*) means to ask or request. But note: it always has a sense of urgency about it. Paul was tenderly requesting his dear brothers to continue to please God in their daily walk, but with an urgent request. It was a necessity that carried with it great blessings for obedience and terrible judgment for disobedience (the displeasure of God). The strength of the exhortation is seen in the following facts:

1. The believers had been taught how they must walk and please God. They had sat under the teachers and preachers of the Word. Therefore, they were without excuse, for they knew exactly how to live and to please God. The word "*ought*" (*dei*) means must; it is an imperative, a necessity. Once the believers had heard and been taught how they should live and please God, they were responsible to live that way. Pleasing God was not an option—it was a duty!

2. The exhortation was based upon the Lord Jesus. It was what the Lord Himself had taught. There is no greater authority than the Lord. He is the supreme Majestic Being of the universe. Therefore, the exhortation to live and walk to please God is of the highest authority.
3. The exhortation involves the actual commandments of the Lord Jesus. This is a repeat of verse one: keeping commandments of the Lord Jesus is not an option. In addition, it has been given by the Lord Himself. Therefore, it must be kept, regardless. We must walk; we must grow day by day more and more to please God.

Note in verse 1 that Paul acknowledges the fact that his readers are already living according to Christian standards, he is merely encouraging them to continue to grow as they already have.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 Living A Holy Life

4:3. Paul has in mind "*sanctification*" or "*holiness*" (*Gr hagiasmos*) as it relates specifically to sexual purity. The Greek word means to keep oneself entirely away from. The major commandment is sanctification, that is, moral purity. This is the "*will of God*." There is no higher "*Will*" than the "*Will of God*." The word "*sanctification*" means to be set apart and separated. We are to be set apart to God and His "*Will*", and His "*Will*" is moral purity. This means three things:

1. *Sanctification* means abstaining from fornication. The word "*fornication*" (*porneias*) means all kinds of immoral sexual acts: adultery, pre-marital sex, homosexuality, and all forms of sexual deviation. The believer is not to give his body to an immoral person, not to a harlot or to an immoral neighbor. The believer's body belongs to Christ, which means that we are to honor Christ with our bodies. We are to take the sexual drive and energy of our bodies and use it as He has instructed.

4:4. Sanctify in marriage was something brand new for the Thessalonians who had come from obviously corrupt Gentile culture. They grew up not knowing God, and now that they had turned to God they needed to know and conform to Christian standards. Now, the Word says, they "*should know how to possess his vessel*." The word "*vessel*" (*Gr skeuos*) is used of the wife as the weaker vessel in 1Pt.3:7.

2. *Sanctification* means that a person knows how to control his body and his spouse. *Leon Morris points out that the word "vessel"(skeuos) can refer either to a person's own body or to a person's spouse (The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries," p.75). Both hold great meaning for the Christian believer. A person can neglect, ignore, and abuse his body and a person can neglect, ignore, and abuse his or her spouse. Neglecting, ignoring, or abusing one's spouse can bring about temptation and can contribute significantly to the spouse becoming unfaithful and impure. Note, the believer is to know "how", to possess his or her body and spouse in sanctification and honor (the word "how" is not in the Greek text). There is no excuse for disobedience or ignorance. The believer is to know...*

- i. beyond a shadow of a doubt. ii. without equivocation. iii. without question.

...that it is his duty to keep his body pure and their spouse body pure. The point is strong: the believing husband and wife are to know that they must keep themselves and each other in sanctification and honor. They must not set themselves apart to dishonorable and immoral neighbors or to harlots.

4:5. This section on practical theology was especially important for the Thessalonians as Gentiles.

3. *Sanctification* means resisting the passion of lust. Note the double emphasis, that is, the wording, "*lust of concupiscence*." It means the passion of lust, the enslaving power of lust. When a person begins to lust, he can soon become enslaved to lust; he can be held by the grip to such a degree that it is almost of impossible to break the bondage. This is true with the.....
 - i. passion for sex.
 - ii. passion for pornographic films and literature.
 - iii. passion for manipulation.
 - iv. passion for exposure.
 - v. passion for sexual conquest.
 - vi. passion for touching.
 - vii. passion for romantic and immoral reading.

The passion of lust is the way of the world. It is not the way of God. It is the lifestyle of those who do not know God. It does not mean that they do not know that sexual immorality is wrong, but it means they have rejected God and His commandments; they have chosen to live in the passion of their lusts. The believer is commanded to please God and to keep the commandments of the Lord Jesus. And the major commandment is our sanctification, that is, moral purity. Therefore we are to sustain from fornication—from all forms of immoral sex (Read: Rom.1:18-32).

4:6. Several words need explanation here. *First*, "*go beyond*" (*Gr hyperbainō*) means quite literally to overstep or break laws. *Second*, "*defraud (Gr pleonekteō) his brother*", denotes taking advantage of, robbing or cheating someone through greed. *Third*, "*in any matter*", that is specially the matter which has just been mentioned— unethical

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sexual activity. The point is: when a man does not live with his own wife as he should, but instead commits adultery with someone else's, he must know that he has violated, or robbed his brother by so doing, and that he deserves the vengeance of God. There are four reasons why we are to live pure lives, and the reasons stand as a severe warning to us.

1. *Immorality* defrauds and cheats a bother, Fornication steals from a person. It either takes a wife from her husband or else it takes the husband from his wife. It is that simple—that tragic—that terrible. It steals one of the two major partners of a family; steals...
 - i. their heart.
 - ii. their affection
 - iii. their thoughts
 - iv. their purity
 - v. their body
 - vi. their innocence
 - vii. their trust & trustworthiness

And the terrible tragedy is that none of these can ever be recovered—not completely, not fully. Once the heart, affection, thoughts, purity, body, innocence, and trust have been lost, they are lost and affected forever thereafter. The marriage and its bond of trust are gone forever. The pain and hurt always linger to some degree and the commitment and ability to totally surrender to the spouse always suffers to some degree. This is the reason God allows divorce after fornication has been committed with marriage. (**Note:** God "allows" divorce; He does not command it. All parties involved in adultery—no matter the situation---can if possible stay together if the injured spouse can bear the pain long enough to recover and build strength). Also Note: the same effects take place upon the unmarried when they commit fornication. The person who seduces the unmarried steals from the person seduced and from the future spouse—steals the person's heart, affection, thoughts, purity, body, innocence, and trust. That's what the enemy does, he comes to steal, kill, and destroy.

2. *Immorality* shall be revenged by God. This point needs to be heeded, especially in a promiscuous (loose) society that accepts it. Society does not make the rules for man's behavior; God makes the rules. He has given the intimacy and preciousness of sex for marriage and only for marriage. And He has made it perfectly clear that any sex outside of marriage will not only be judged, but He will personally avenge the guilty party. Why? Because the guilty party...
 - a. stole the life of a person (spiritually speaking).
 - b. broke the person's trust and innocence for the rest of his life.

4:7. This kind of conduct is the opposite of holiness and is called uncleanness.

3. *Immorality* is not God's call; holiness is. When God calls us to salvation, He does not call us to live unclean lives, giving us the license to go from person to person. Such immorality...
 - i. destroys genuine love for self, and for others.
 - ii. destroys trust and trustworthiness of self, and of others.
 - iii. destroys discipline and control of self, and of others.
 - iv. destroys true care and concern for self, and for others.
 - v. destroys ego and esteem of self, and of others.
 - vi. destroys confidence and assurance in self, and in others.
 - vii. destroys loyalty and commitment within self, and within others.
 - viii. destroys freedom and will within self, and within others.
 - ix. destroys justice and fair treatment of others, and lastly.
 - x. destroys family and even a nation.

God never calls a person to do such terrible things. He calls us to holiness—to live lives that are set apart to Him and to purity, to our spouses and families. God calls us to build strong character and communities, strong families and nations. God calls us to holiness so that we can be strong enough to reach out to a world that reels under the awful weight of suffering and death. There is hope; there is salvation from evil and suffering and from death and judgment. But we must be sanctified and holy, totally set apart to building the strongest characters and families, communities and societies possible in order to reach the world. Again, God does not call us to uncleanness and disintegration (breakdown) of character and society. God calls us to holiness.

4:8. Paul here seems to allude to a saying of Jesus recorded in Lk.10:16, where Jesus gives authority to the apostles, and literally explains, "*Whoever listens (obeys) to you, listens (obeys) to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me; the person who rejects me, rejects the one who sent me.*" Note that "*despise*" and "*reject*" translate the same Greek word.

4. Immorality is a sin against God. The word "*despiset*" means to reject. Most persons reject this commandment of God as being *old fashioned* and *unacceptable* in an intellectual and enlightened society. But note what scripture says: "*...he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God...*" The idea is that the preacher or teacher may be able to do little to us if we disregard the commandment. But God can take vengeance, and He will. Every human being who ever breaks the commandment shall receive the vengeance of God—unless

he has repented and sought the forgiveness of God.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 Minding Our Own Business

Every believer should be ambitious to please God. This passage gives four very practical ways that we can please God ;four practical duties that must be obeyed.

1. Grow in love more and more (v.9-10).
2. Study to be quiet (v.11).
3. Do your own business (v11).
4. Work with your own hands (v.11-12).

4:9. Paul continues to encourage the Thessalonians in their Christian walk and, now focuses on encouraging them to love. In the Greek the word love is not the word that is usually used for love. The word that is usually used for Christian love is "*agape*", but here it is "*philadelphia*", a very special kind of love, brotherly love, that exists between the brothers and sisters within a loving family, brothers and sisters who truly cherish each other. The kind of love...

- i. that binds each other together as a family, as a brotherly clan.
- ii. that binds each in an unbreakable union. That holds each other ever so deeply within the heart.
- iii. that knows deep affection for each other.
- iv. that nourishes and nurtures each other.
- v. that shows concern and looks after the welfare of each other.
- vi. that joins hands with each other in a common purpose under one father (*The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries," p.80*).

Note: Paul says there is no need for him to exhort the Thessalonians to love each other as brothers. Nevertheless, he does. Why? If there is no need, why does he encourage them to love each other? There are two reasons:

1. It was God who taught the Thessalonians to love each other. Therefore, as God's servant, Paul was driven to follow God; to stir the people of God to continue to love each other as brothers. This was and still is an absolute essential for the church.
 - a. Christian believers need each other in order to make it through life. Living for Christ is not easy in a corrupt world that offers the bright lights of pleasure but ends up in suffering death. We all face temptation. We need the love of each other in order to stand against the temptations and to walk through the sufferings of life.
 - b. The greatest threat to the church is that of internal strife and divisiveness. Nothing destroys the ministry of a church any quicker than criticism, grumbling, murmuring, gossiping, selfishness, cliquishness, and ambitiousness-- to have one's own way or to secure some position.

The point is this: God actually teaches believers to love each other as brothers. This means that God works within our hearts and stirs us to love each other. God arouses the thought within our minds—flashes the thought across our minds—the thought that we should love each other as brothers. Therefore, we are to grab hold of that thought and of the stirring within our hearts by the Holy Ghost and love each other.

4:10. For the Thessalonians, Macedonia was home. If we cannot love those at home, how can we love others far away? Therefore this leads Paul to not admonish them, but to definitely exhort (urge) them.

2. There is always the need to grow in love more and more. Note the Thessalonian believers were noted for their love, not only within their own church, but throughout the whole district or state of Macedonia. But they were not yet perfected in love. No person is! Therefore, there is always the need to grow and abound in love, more and more, because you are taught by God to do so.

4:11a. "*Study to be quiet*"; what does that mean? The word "*study*" (*philotimeomai*) means to be ambitious; to strive eagerly; to seek with all the energy a person has. The very meaning of the word study shows the supreme importance of quietness. Remember the church at Thessalonica was facing two critical problems:

1. It was facing the problem of persecution.
2. And the problem of some criticism and divisiveness against Paul.

The point is this: we are to live a quiet and peaceable life before each other. We are not to be critical and divisive toward each other. We are to walk in a quiet and meek spirit out in the world. We are not to be abusive and arrogant in witnessing and in dealing with the world.

POINT:

- *Although a believer is hurting, he needs to be heard, and the only way he can be heard is for us to be quiet and listen to him.*
- *The world is hurting—everyone in the world has or have had some hurt. Therefore, we must be quiet and listen for the hurt so that we can do what Christ said: minister to them.*

- *Also, the world needs the gospel, but the gospel cannot be effectively proclaimed in the midst of noise—not effectively and not in an appealing way. Noise pierces the ear and distracts. There must be quietness of atmosphere and mind for the gospel to have its most effective impact.*
- *Believers must study to be quiet instead of studying to be critical and divisive. You can hardly be effective when you share your faith with others, and people don't respect you. Whatever you do, do it faithfully and be a positive force in society.*

4:11b. "Do your own business", that is, mind your own business. Can you believe the Word of God says this? Why? Because too many are busybodies and meddle in the affairs of others. What is it that causes a person to meddle in the business of others?

- A person meddles because he is critical by nature.
- A person meddles because he fails to see his own shortcomings and failures.
- A person meddles because he does not have enough to do.

What the busybody needs is to become so occupied with the things of Christ; to undertaking the mission of Christ that he has no time to meddle in the affairs of others. This exhortation is strong.

4:11c. "Work with your own hands": The Thessalonian believers became so excited over the return of the Lord (His Second Coming) and the promise of being with Him forever that in their zeal, they abandoned their jobs. The result was catastrophic. They now had to sponge off the other believers in order to survive. Their action had been most unwise. Therefore, Paul commanded them: "*work with your own hands*"—quit sponging off others. Two reasons are given for labor:

1. We must labor in order to walk honestly before outsiders, that is, before the world of unbelievers. Of all people Christians must set a dynamic example of work. One of the very purposes for which man has been put on earth is to work.
 - a. Man is to subdue and gain dominion over the earth in all its unregulated and catastrophic forces (Gen.1:28).
 - b. Man is to work to provide the necessities of life for all men (Gen.2:15).
 - c. Man is to work in order to have enough to give to the needy of the world (Eph.4:28).

The exhortation is clear. The inactive, lazy, complacent—all are to hear the clear command of God: "*Work with your own hands.*" The old expression says, "*Idle hands are the devil's workshop.*" When someone isn't busy, they're in prime location for sin.

4:12. We are to set examples for the unbelievers. It would be wrong and harmful to their testimonies to depend upon the church to feed their families if they were able to work. The world is always looking at the actions of Christians. Therefore, their level of commitment will always show their true motivation for action.

2. We must labor in order to have no lack, not having to beg from others for the supply of their wants.

The Thessalonians had to suffer much from the people who did not believe in Christ, but we are always to remember that pleasing God will always be the right motivation for our actions to walk in holiness, love, and diligence; focusing on nothing else but God alone. And the right instructions will always come from God.

SUMMARY:

Paul gives three outlines:

¹A. WALK IN HOLINESS (4:1-8)

1. To please God (4:1-2)
2. To abstain from sexual immorality (4:3-8)

B. WALK IN LOVE (4:9-10)

1. As they are taught by God to love one another (4:9)
2. To increase more and more (4:10)

C. WALK IN DILIGENCE (4:11-12)

1. To work with their hands (4:11)
2. To walk properly toward those who are outside (4:12)

APPLICATION:

Maybe you've hardened your heart against this Word. It's not up to me to convince you. If you're rejecting this, you're not rejecting me; you're rejecting the Holy Spirit who is gently calling you to repentance. Holiness (or sanctification) is not something that believers attempt to muster on their own, God brings it to pass! We are told to walk in holiness, walk in love, and walk in diligence which is demonstrated in action.

¹ http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/1th/1th_00.htm

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>